

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 CARACA 11159 01 OF 03 162222Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 CARACAS 11159

FOR ARA/AND/V AND D/HA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, VE
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS EVALUATION REPORT FOR VENEZUELA

REFS: CARACAS 5670, CARACAS A-157, CARACAS A-55,
STATE 262336, STATE 140421

1. FOLLOWING IS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUESTED BY D/HA
KEYED TO PARAGRAPHS IN STATE 140421:

A. CONDITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN VENEZUELA:

1. RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON, INCLUDING
FREEDOM FROM:
A. TORTURE: AS REPORTED IN A-55 AND OTHER SUB-
MISSIONS, VENEZUELA'S RECORD IS GOOD. THE MOST
SERIOUS OFFENSE IN THIS REGARD WAS THE APPARENT TORTURE OF A
LEFTIST LEADER OF THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE, JORGE RODRIGUEZ, WHICH
RESULTED IN HIS DEATH JULY 25, 1976. HE HAD BEEN ARRESTED
TWO DAYS EARLIER BY THE INTERIOR MINISTRY SECURITY SERVICE
(DISIP) ON SUSPICION OF BEING INVOLVED IN THE KIDNAPPING
OF U.S. BUSINESSMAN WILLIAM NIEHOUS. FOUR DISIP AGENTS
WERE CHARGED AND ARE NOW ON TRIAL FOR THIS CRIME. BOTH
PRESIDENT PEREZ AND INTERIOR MINISTER LEPAGE CONDEMNED THIS
CRIME IN THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE TERMS. WITH REGARD TO THE
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PAGE 02 CARACA 11159 01 OF 03 162222Z

MATTER OF TORTURE AND THE GOV'S POLICY TOWARD THE GUERRILLAS
IN EASTERN VENEZUELA (CARACAS A-157), THE EMBASSY HAS CON-
TRADICTORY REPORTS. CERTAIN REPORTS NOTE THAT PRESIDENT
PEREZ HAS INFORMED THE SECURITY AUTHORITIES TO USE WHATEVER
METHODS ARE NECESSARY TO ELIMINATE THE GUERRILLA THREAT.
OTHER, SLIGHTLY EARLIER REPORTS, CONTRADICT THIS INFORMATION.
THESE EARLIER REPORTS STATE THAT THE GOV HAS DELIBERATELY

DECIDED NOT TO UNDERTAKE STRONG-ARM METHODS, INCLUDING TORTURE, OF POTENTIAL SUSPECTS, BOTH TO AVOID CREATING MARTYRS, AND ALSO TO MAINTAIN VENEZUELA'S HUMAN RIGHTS IMAGE INTERNATIONALITY. THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE GOV RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING SUCH ABUSES HAS RECEIVED NO RECENT COMPLAINTS CONCERNING THE USE OF TORTURE AGAINST ANY PERSONS CHARGED WITH CRIMES AGAINST STATE SECURITY. THEREFORE, WHILE INDIVIDUAL ABUSES ARE ALWAYS POSSIBLE, THE EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THE GOV HAS DECIDED, AS A MATTER OF POLICY, TO TORTURE THOSE INVOLVED IN INSURGENCY. HOWEVER, THE EMBASSY WILL REMAIN ALERT TO ANY INFORMATION WHICH COULD SUBSTANTIATE THE REPORTS THAT THE GOV "WILL USE ANY METHOD NECESSARY TO ELIMINATE THE GUERILLAS."

B. CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENT:

THE GOV DOES NOT PROMOTE OR CONDONE CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENT BY ITS POLICE/SECURITY OFFICIALS INVOLVING EITHER COMMON CRIMINALS OR PERSONS ACCUSED OF POLITICAL/TERRORIST ACTIVITIES AGAINST THE SECURITY OF THE STATE. THE MOST RECENT CHARGE OF INHUMAN TREATMENT (PAGE 5 OF CARACAS A-157) CONCERNS STATEMENTS PUBLISHED BY THE COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS (CDDH), BELIEVED TO BE A FAR-LEFT FRONT ORGANIZATION OF "BANDERA ROJA" WHICH DENOUNCED THE ALLEGED DELIBERATE BEATINGS OF 13 PRISONERS BEING HELD IN THE CARACAS MILITARY PRISON FOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE NIEHOUS

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PAGE 03 CARACA 11159 01 OF 03 162222Z

KIDNAPPING. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LAWYERS OF THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT, EMBASSY OFFICERS WERE INFORMED THAT THE OFFICE UNDERTOOK A FULL INVESTIGATION, INCLUDING A MEDICAL EXAMINATION FOR THE ONE PERSON WHO ACTUALLY SUFFERED INJURIES. ACCORDING TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICIALS NO BEATINGS OR OTHER INHUMAN TREATMENT OCCURRED. RATHER, THERE WAS A DISTURBANCE IN ONE CELL AND ONE PRISONER WAS SLIGHTLY INJURED WHEN THE GUARDS ENTERED THE CELL TO END THE DISTURBANCE. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THERE HAVE BEEN NO CASES OF CRUEL OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENT AGAINST PRISONERS. THERE HAVE BEEN, IN ADDITION TO THE DEATH OF JORGE RODRIGUEZ, (MENTIONED IN PARAGRAPH A ABOVE) TWO OTHER DEATHS OF VENEZUELAN AT THE HANDS OF THE POLICE. THE FIRST IS THAT OF FERNANDO QUINTERO, A STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CARABOBO IN VALENCIA, WHO WAS FATALLY SHOT BY TWO MEMBERS OF THE INVESTIGATIVE POLICE (PTJ) ON MARCH 23 (CARACAS 5670). WHEN THE POLICE OFFICERS REALIZED THAT THEY HAD MISTAKEN QUINTERO FOR A WANTED CRIMINAL, THEY DISCARDED HIS BODY IN A FIELD. BOTH POLICEMEN WILL STAND TRIAL FOR MURDER. THE SECOND, A MORE RECENT CASE, CONCERNS A 17 YEAR OLD YOUTH, A MEMBER OF THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE WHO WAS KILLED BY TWO NATIONAL GUARDSMEN (CARACAS A-157) IN PUERTO LA CRUZ WHILE HE WAS

PAINTING WALL SLOGS. THE GUARDSMEN HAVE BEEN ARRESTED BY MILITARY AUTHORITIES AND WILL ALSO STAND TRIAL. WHILE DISTINCTIONS ARE SOMETIMES INVIDIOUS, THE EMBASSY PRESUMES THAT CRUEL AND INHUMAN PUNISHMENT IS PROBABLY MORE LIKELY TO OCCUR WITH COMMON CRIMINALS THAN WITH PERSONS CHARGED WITH POLITICAL CRIMES SINCE THE FORMER HAVE NO POLITICAL CAUSE THEIR COMRADES CAN CHAMPION PUBLICLY NOR DO THEY HAVE A RELATIVE SOPHISTICATED KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS AND THE LEGAL SYSTEM. COMMON CRIMINALS ARE ALSO PROBABLY LESS LIKELY TO MAKE FORMAL COMPLAINTS TO THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

C. ARBITRARY ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT: UNDER VENEZUELAN LAW, ALL PERSONS CHARGED WITH CRIMES CANNOT BE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 CARACA 11159 01 OF 03 162222Z

HELD LONGER THAN EIGHT DAYS WITHOUT FORMAL CHARGES BEING FILED AGAINST THEM. IN MOST CASES SUCH CHARGES ARE FILED WITHIN THE TIME PERIOD PROVIDED. HOWEVER, IN SOME CASES, FILING OF CHARGES IS DELAYED, MOST OFTEN BECAUSE OF THE SLOW-MOVING NATURE OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM, RATHER THAN A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT TO DENY THE LEGAL RIGHTS OF THE ACCUSED.

CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 CARACA 11159 02 OF 03 162238Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 CARACAS 11159

FOR ARA/AND/V AND D/HA

IN ADDITION, WHILE THE LAW STIPULATES AN EIGHT-DAY PERIOD, THERE ARE NO LEGAL PENALTY PERIODS FOR FAILURE TO MEET THIS STANDARD. IF CHARGES ARE NOT FILED WITHIN THE EIGHT-DAY PERIOD, THE ACCUSED CAN APPEAL TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE

OF THE GOV WHICH UNDERTAKES A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION TO ASCERTAIN THAT ALL PROPER LEGAL STEPS ARE FOLLOWED. ARREST WARRANTS ARE ISSUED HERE EITHER BY CIVILIAN OR MILITARY JUDGES ON THE BASIS OF PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE PRESENTED BY POLICE OR MILITARY AUTHORITIES. IN THE RECENT CASES OF ARRESTS OF VENEZUELAN RADICALS BELONGING TO VARIOUS FAR-LEFT FRONT GROUPS (SEE CARACAS A-157) THE EMBASSY WAS INFORMED THAT ALL OF THESE PERSONS WERE DETAINED ONLY AFTER FORMAL WARRANTS WERE ISSUED. WE KNOW OF NO SPECIFIC CASES WHERE PERSONS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED WITHOUT THE ISSUANCE OF SUCH WARRANTS OR IMPRISONED WITHOUT SUCH WARRANTS.

D. DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL: AS REPORTED IN CARACAS A-55, AND 5670, THE WHEELS OF JUSTICE GRIND SLOWLY IN VENEZUELA AND THIS AMOUNTS, IN SOME CASES, TO A DE FACTO DENIAL OF A FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL. HOWEVER, THIS IS NOT DUE TO CONSCIOUS GOV POLICY BUT RATHER TO THE NATURE OF THE VENEZUELAN LEGAL SYSTEM. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE IN CASES INVOLVING THE MILITARY COURTS WHERE PRISONERS ACCUSED OF TERRORIST OR SUBVERSIVE ACTS CAN BE AND HAVE BEEN INCARCERATED FOR LENGTHY PERIODS WITHOUT TRIALS SINCE THERE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 CARACA 11159 02 OF 03 162238Z

IS NO ENFORCEABLE LIMIT ON THE AMOUNT OF TIME THE STATE CAN TAKE IN PREPARING A CASE FOR TRIAL. (THIS UNDOUBTEDLY ACCOUNTS FOR THE CHARGES BY THE COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL THAT THERE ARE POLITICAL PRISONERS IN VENEZUELA.)

E. INVASION OF THE HOME: AGAIN, THERE ARE PROBABLY SCATTERED INSTANCES OF VENEZUELAN AUTHORITIES HAVING ENTERED PRIVATE HOMES WITHOUT SEARCH WARRANTS. HOWEVER, THE MORE USUAL PRACTICE IS FOR THE AUTHORITIES TO OBTAIN WARRANTS BEFORE ENTERING. IN THE RECENT CASES OF SEIZURE OF FAR-LEFT MAGAZINES IN THE CLOSING OF OFFICES OF THE COMMITTEE FOR POPULAR STRUGGLE (CLP) AND RUPTURA, THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS HAS INFORMED US THAT SEARCH WARRANTS WERE ISSUED. FURTHER, NO FORMAL COMPLAINTS WERE FILED WITH THAT OFFICE ALLEGING ILLEGAL ENTRY IN THESE CASES.

2. RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES.

A. FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLY:

RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES IS WELL ESTABLISHED. THERE IS NO PRIOR CENSORSHIP, AND ALL RELIGIOUS GROUPS ARE FREE TO ORGANIZE AND TO PRACTICE THEIR RELIGION WITHOUT STATE INTERFERENCE. BOOKS AND PERIODICALS ARE GENERALLY PERMITTED TO PRINT THEIR VIEWS, RANGING FROM THE FAR-LEFT TO THE FAR-RIGHT. THE ONLY GENERAL LIMITATION ON EXPRESSING

ONE'S VIEWS CONCERNING ACTIVITIES CONSIDERED OPENLY SUBVERSIVE OF THE STATE. THE MOST RECENT CASE IN THIS REGARD INVOLVES A REPORTER, IRMA BERRETO (CARACAS 9873), WHO ON OCTOBER 10 WAS FORMALLY CHARGED BEFORE A MILITARY COURT UNDER ARTICLE 66 OF THE CONSTITUTION FOR PROMOTING SUBVERSIVE PROPAGANDA AND ACTIVITIES FOLLOWING AN INTERVIEW WITH CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CARACA 11159 02 OF 03 162238Z

GUERRILLAS IN THE FIELD WHICH SHE HAD PUBLISHED IN LATE SEPTEMBER. THE REPORTER HERSELF HAS BEEN JAILED, BUT THE MAGAZINE CONTINUES TO APPEAR REGULARLY.

B. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, FOREIGN TRAVEL AND EMIGRATION POLICIES. VENEZUELA IS AN OPEN SOCIETY AND THE STATE PLACES NO RESTRICTIONS ON TRAVEL. THERE ARE NO KNOWN POLITICAL TESTS FOR VENEZUELAN CITIZENS WISHING TO OBTAIN TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION AND ALL VENEZUELAN ARE PERMITTED TO TRAVEL FREELY, BOTH WITHIN THE COUNTRY AND OVERSEAS. VENEZUELAN WISHING TO TRAVEL ABROAD MUST, HOWEVER, PRESENT DOCUMENTATION SHOWING THEY HAVE PAID THEIR INCOME TAX.

C. DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES ASSURING THE FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS: THIS FREEDOM IS HELD IN HIGH REGARD. NOT ONLY ARE THERE FLOURISHING POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS, BUT MORE THAN 90PCT OF THE ELIGIBLE POPULATION REGULARLY VOTES IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS. (ALTHOUGH IN THEORY THERE ARE SANCTIONS FOR CITIZENS WHO FAIL TO VOTE THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN APPLIED WHICH MAKES THE LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION ALL THE MORE REMARKABLE). OPPOSITION POLITICANS HAVE FULL ACCESS TO ALL THE MEDIA, INCLUDING THE GOV-OWNED AND OPERATED RADIO AND TELEVISION STATIONS. (SPECIFIC EXAMPLES: VENEZUELAN COMMUNIST PARTY PRESIDENT CANDIDATE, HECTOR MUJICA, RECENTLY APPEARED AS THE GUEST ON AN HOUR-LONG INTERVIEW PROGRAM ON THE GOV TELEVISION STATION. THE MOVEMENT TOWARD SOCIALISM (MAS), AN INDEPENDENT MARXIST PARTY, BOUGHT A FULL HOUR OF TV TIME ON THE MOST POPULAR PRIVATE TV STATION TO AIR A PROGRAM SHOWING A RALLY IN SUPPORT OF ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE.)

D. STATUS OF LABOR MOVEMENT.

VENEZUELA RANKS ALONGSIDE THE INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS OF EUROPE, NORTH AMERICA AND JAPAN IN THE FIELD
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PAGE 04 CARACA 11159 02 OF 03 162238Z

OF LABOR RIGHTS. THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IS LARGE AND ACTIVE; UNIONS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR HAVE THE RIGHT TO BARGAIN COLLECTIVELY WITH MANAGEMENT AND TO STRIKE AS DO PUBLIC SECTOR BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS. TESTIMONY TO THE INTENSE ACTIVITY OF TRADE UNIONS IN VENEZUELA IS THE FACT THAT IN 1976, 1,754 COLLECTIVE CONTRACTS WERE SIGNED COVERING 333,653 WORKERS. THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LAW PROHIBITS STRIKES AND COLLECTIVE CONTRACTS AMONG "INTELLECTUAL EMPLOYEES" OF THE GOVERNMENT BUT THE AMBIGUOUS DISTINCTION BETWEEN THESE AND BLUE COLLAR WORKERS IN FACT HAS ALLOWED MANY GROUPS OF GOVERNMENT WHITE COLLAR WORKERS TO ENTER INTO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS. THE DOMINANT ACCION DEMOCRATICA PARTY IN VENEZUELA INCLUDES LABOR AS ONE OF ITS PILLARS AND WORKS HARD TO ACCOMMODATE LABOR'S INTERESTS. COMPETING POLITICAL PARTIES OF THE LEFT HAVE A STRONG LABOR BASE AND FIRMLY ADVOCATE LIBERAL LABOR POLICY. AD'S PRINCIPAL RIVAL, THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY (COPEI) CONTAINS A WEAKER LABOR COMPONENT BUT FEELS THE NEED TO COMPETE WITH AD IN ATTRACTING LABOR SUPPORT. THUS, IN CONTEMPORARY VENEZUELA LABOR RIGHTS HAVE STRONG POLITICAL AS WELL AS LEGAL UNDERPINNINGS.

3. RECENT TRENDS IN GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES RELATING TO THE FULFILLMENT OF BASIC NEEDS FOR FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 CARACA 11159 03 OF 03 162237Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 CARACAS 11159

FOR ARA/AND/V AND D/HA

A. POLICIES DESIGNED TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE POOR AND POLICIES WHICH TEND TO IGNORE THE NEEDS OF THE POOR: THE POLICIES OF THE GOV ARE DESIGNED TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE POOR AND INCLUDE SUPPLEMENTARY NUTRITIONAL PROGRAMS FOR UNDER PRIVILEGED CHILDREN, LOW COST HOUSING

PROJECTS IN MOST TOWNS AND CITIES, A VASE EXPANSION IN HEALTH CARE FACILITIES IN THE INTERIOR, AND AN INCREASED NUMBER OF HIGH SCHOOLS AND TECHNICAL INSTITUTES NATIONWIDE. THE GOV HAS PROGRAMMED SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNTS OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR BUDGET (65PCT) FOR BASIC SOCIAL SERVICES (NON-CAPITAL EXPENDITURES) TO THE COUNTRY'S GROWING POPULATION. THE GOV IS ALSO COMMITTED TO SEVERAL ENORMOUS BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN BAUXITE, STEEL, HYDRO-ELECTRIC GENERATION, TRANSPORTATION, ETC., TO DIVERSITY THE ECONOMIC BASE, SO THAT VENEZUELA WILL EVENTUALLY BECOME LESS DEPENDENT ON PETROLEUM AS ITS BASIC SOURCE OF WEALTH. HOWEVER, BY MOST OBJECTIVE STANDARDS, THE GOV IS HIGHLY INTERESTED IN AND COMMITTED AS WELL TO FURNISHING BASIC SOCIAL SERVICES TO THE POOR AND A MORE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME.

1. CORRUPTION OF SUCH A NATURE THAT SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES ARE DIVERTED TOWARD THE NATION'S ELITE AND AWAY FROM THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION: CORRUPTION IS A PROBLEM IN CONTEMPORARY VENEZUELA, PARTICULARLY AMONG THOSE INVOLVED IN LETTING GOVERNMENT-RELATED CONTRACTS.
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PAGE 02 CARACA 11159 03 OF 03 162237Z

HOWEVER, THE EMBASSY HAS NO INFORMATION TO SUBSTANTIATE THAT A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF THE NATION'S RESOURCES IS DIVERTED FROM THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION BECUASE OF CORRUPTION. IN FACT, EMBASSY PRESUMES THAT CORRUPTION IN ITSELF ACCOUNTS FOR A SMALL FRACTION OF THE GOV'S TOTAL BUDGETARY OUTLAYS.

B.R.B. WHERE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IS GOOD OR ENCOURAGING, INDICATE THE LIKELIHOOD OF GOV SUPPORTING U.S. EFFORTS TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS:

SINCE THE EMBASSY IS NOT FULLY COGNIZANT OF ALL THE INITIATIVES BEING UNDERTAKEN BY THE DEPARTMENT, AND/OR USUN, VIS-A-VIS OTHER (LATIN) COUNTRIES, OUR COMMENTS MUST NECESSARILY BE PAROCHIAL. THE GOV IN GENERAL, AND PRESIDENT PEREZ IN PARTICULAR, FULLY SHARE USG OBJECTIVES IN PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. THE GOV PLAYED AN ACTIVE AND KEY ROLE DURING THE OAS GA NEGOTIATIONS IN GRENADA, HAS RATIFIED THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS CONVENTION, AND OF COURSE, SIGNED A JOINT COMMUNIQUE REGARDING HUMAN RIGHTS DURING PRESIDENT PEREZ' STATE VISIT TO THE U.S. DR. ANDRES AGUILAR, A LEADING VENEZUELAN JURIST, IS CHAIRMAN OF THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. IN THIS CAPACITY, DR.AGUILAR, AN EXTREMELY ABLE AND KNOWLEDGEABLE PERSON, HAS ENABLED VENEZUELA TO PLAY AN EVEN MORE DYNAMIC ROLE IN INTER-AMERICAN RIGHTS ACTIVITIES THAN WOULD OTHERWISE BE THE CASE. THE GOV

U.N. DELEGATION FOLLOWS HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVES CLOSELY AND IS INTERESTED IN TAKING FEASIBLE STEPS TO PROMOTE SUCH ACTIVITIES. THERE ARE, OF COURSE, SEVERAL LIMITING FACTORS WHICH COME INTO PLAY IN REGARD TO THE GOV'S EFFORTS IN THIS FIELD. FIRST, VENEZUELA'S INFLUENCE ON LATIN MILITARY DIC-
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PAGE 03 CARACA 11159 03 OF 03 162237Z

TATORSHIPS' HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES IS VERY CIRCUMSCRIBED. PEREZ HAS DISCUSSED THE STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS PERSONALLY WITH PRESIDENT VIDELA OF ARGENTINA, PRESIDENT MORALEZ BERMUDEZ OF PERU, AND OTHER LATIN LEADERS, AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO RAISE THIS ISSUE WITH PRESIDENT GEISEL IN BRAZIL DURING HIS STATE VISIT THIS WEEK. BUT VENEZUELA SIMPLY DOES NOT HAVE THE POLITICAL WEIGHT TO DO MORE THAN QUIETLY SUGGEST THAT THE DEMOCRATIC COURSE IS THE BEST EVENTUAL OPTION FOR THESE COUNTRIES. SECOND, IN REGARD TO OPEC, VENEZUELA HAS VIRTUALLY NO INFLUENCE ON OR DESIRE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN DOMESTIC OPEC COUNTRY POLITICS. VENEZUELA PERCEIVES OF OPEC AS THE CORNERSTONE OF ITS FOREIGN POLICY. IT ALSO PERCEIVES OF OPEC AS THE ONLY INSTITUTION WHICH CAN PROVIDE SUFFICIENT ECONOMIC RESOURCES TO THE VENEZUELAN STATE TO PERMIT RAPID ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, THUS AVOIDING SERIOUS INTERNAL POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES WHICH COULD ERODE THE VENEZUELAN DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM. IN ADDITION, ASIDE FROM OIL, VENEZUELA HAS FEW COMMERCIAL OR CULTURAL LINKS WITH THE ARAB WORLD AND REALIZES THAT EVEN THE SUGGESTION OF INTERNAL MEDDLING WOULD BE TAKEN AMISS BY HER OPEC PARTNERS. THUS, THERE IS NO LIKELIHOOD THAT VENEZUELA WOULD EVER CONSIDER RAISING HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATION WITHIN THE OPEC CONTEXT.

IN REGARD TO D/HA INTEREST IN SEEKING SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS, THE GOV WOULD CLEARLY BE INTERESTED, WITHIN THE UN CONTEXT, IN EXPLORING LEGAL MECHANISMS TO GIVE FURTHER PUBLICITY TO THE CAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS. VENEZUELA ACTIVELY SUPPORTED THE COSTA RICAN INITIATIVE FOR A U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER. IT WOULD ALSO, PRESUMABLY, BE INTERESTED IN OTHER VARIATIONS ON THIS THEME--INCLUDING THE POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONERS FOR AFRICA, ASIA, AND LATIN AMERICA, IF SUCH INITIATIVES COULD OBTAIN SUFFICIENT SUPPORT FROM MODERATE STATES IN THOSE REGIONS. IT MIGHT ALSO BE WILLING TO CONSIDER FURTHER INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE IAHRC AND/OR U.N. ENTITIES AND LEGAL AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS PROMOTING HUMAN
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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 CARACA 11159 03 OF 03 162237Z

RIGHTS ACTIVITIES IN THE HEMISPHERE.

C. STATUS OF GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES - IN EASTERN VENEZUELA
TWO SMALL RADICAL INSURGENT GROUPS ONTINUE TO FUNCTION WITH
RELATIVE IMPUNITY. FOLLOWING AN AUGUST PRISON ESCAPE OF
13 GUERRILLAS, THE ARMED INSURGENTS HAVE STEPPED UP THEIR
ACTIVITIES, WHICH HAVE INCLUDED RECENT SUCCESSFUL HOLD-UPS
OF RANCHES, SEIZURES OF SMALL TOWNS, AND OTHER ACTS AIMED
AT GERNERING PUBLICITY. THESE ACTIVITIES HAVE FOCUSED
NATIONAL ATTENTION ON THE PROBLEMS OF RURAL INSURGENCY.
THE GOV HAS MOVED ON TWO FRONTS: FIRST, IT CLOSED DOWN
VARIOUS RADICAL FRONT-GROUP PUBLICATIONS AND OFFICES, AND
TEMPORARILY HELD BUT HAS APPARENTLY RELEASED MEMBERS OF FRONT-
GROUPS (SEE PARAGRAPH 1A, 1C ABOVE). IT HAS ALSO STEPPED
UP MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE ARE, AND MAY HAVE ASSIGNED OVERALL
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ANTI-GUERRILLA CAMPAIGN TO THE
NATIONAL GUARD. THE MOST WERIOUS OFFENSE INVOLVING THE
INSURGENCY, ALBEIT INDIRECTLY, OCCURRED NOVEMBER 1 WHEN A
17 YEAR OLD YOUTH, A MEMBER OF THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE, A RADICAL
FRONT GROUP, WAS KILLED BY TWO NATIONAL GUARDSMEN(SEE 1A,1B).
ASIDE FROM THIS INCIDENT, HOWEVER, THE GOV'S HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE TO DATE HAS NOT RECEIVED ANY COMPLAINTS ABOUT ABUSES
ON THE PART OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES, AGAINST THOSE ACCUSED OF
SUPPORTING THE GUERRILLAS. (FOR A DETAILRD REPORT ON THE STATE
OF THE INSURGENCY, THE GOV RESPONSE AND RELATED HUMAN RIGHTS
CONSIDERATIONS, SEE CARACAS A-157).
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